

HELSINKI

1939

KK

Parliament Building.

HELSINGIN
YLIOPISTON
KIRJASTO



Bird's-eye view of Helsinki.

HELSINKI

Olympic City 1940

The word «modern» cannot fail to occur in any description of Helsinki. One of the immediately obvious things about Helsinki is its modern character, an indescribable air of solid, respectable modernity.

Much of Helsinki (Swedish Helsingfors) really is new. To say that the population has increased in the last ten years from 235,000 to over 300,000 is to give only an imperfect idea of the rate at which the city is developing. The suburbs, villa communities and villages outside of the municipal boundaries, whose inhabitants come daily to Helsinki to work and shop and rely on Helsinki for their cultural needs and amusements, have grown still more rapidly. And for this growth too, the city has had to cater. Actually, over half of the present city was built or rebuilt since 1918.

Yet although Helsinki is largely young, there is nothing painfully new in its appearance. Old trees and ripe plantations carry their own unmistakable message of traditions. And above

all, the marvellously clear and sootless air, thanks to which one recognizes old buildings rather by their architectural style than by any obtrusive dinginess, has a wonderfully levelling effect on the whole. It welds together new and old in a common brightness, which is further enhanced by the spick and span appearance of the streets produced by relentless street-cleaning regulations. In spite of indefatigable builders determined to be as modern as possible, Helsinki manages to retain a homogenous air.

Clearly, therefore, the real individuality of Helsinki cannot reside in its modernity, all-pervading though this may be. The key to the abiding character of Helsinki lies rather in the way in which it harmonizes with its site, with the granite peninsula on which it is built and the granite islets and cobbles that guard it from the sea. Once one notices its perfect accord with those sea-washed rugged coasts, glittering with spume, green in every sheltered crevice, swept by sea breezes, alive with the unrelenting pulse of the sea, one seems to grasp the spirit of Helsinki. The granite canyons of its streets, the solidity of its buildings are seen to be expressions of this spirit. Suddenly one sees Helsinki as a true city of its own northern seas, clean, fresh, sparkling, open to sea and sky.

THE HEART OF HELSINKI

● The present heart of Helsinki is the region lying between *South Harbour*, where the passenger steamers plying between Finland and Baltic and North Sea ports berth almost in the colourful Market Place, and the monumental *Railway Station*. The broad Esplanade running west from the Market Place, with its park-like central plantation terminating at each end in an open-air restaurant, the parallel *Aleksanterinkatu*, a street of shops, banks and offices, the cross-streets between these two, and the busy avenue *Heikinkatu* are the liveliest and the most fashionable part of Helsinki. Within or near this region are the leading hotels, the most elegant shops, restaurants and cafés. Here in the daytime the crowded pavements reveal the Helsinki public at its most typical — well-dressed, one might say smartly-dressed, eager, lively, well-conducted. Here, when the nights begin to turn dark — in the middle of the summer the white nights make street-lighting superfluous — electric signs blaze or glow everywhere. Here one catches the human spirit of present-day Helsinki, the temper of modern Finland.

OLD HELSINKI

● Quite beside this City area lies an older Helsinki, this too stretching down to South Harbour. The buildings forming the background of the Market Place, from the municipal offices on the left to the President's Residence at the other end, belong, with the exception of the discreetly modern Swedish Legation, to late nineteenth century Helsinki. Turn up any of the narrow streets that pierce this background, and you go back yet a few more decades in time. *Suurlori Square* dominated by *Suirkirkko Church*, whose cupolas are visible far out at sea, was the centre of Helsinki in the days of side-whiskers, bustles, horse-

drawn vehicles and sailing-ships. Imagine the church, the University on the left side of the enormous square and the State Council Building on the right the biggest buildings in a very much smaller Helsinki, and you have an idea of what Helsinki was like in the 'fifties.

A house at the bottom of the square is the oldest building in Helsinki. It may seem curious that the oldest building in a town founded in 1550 should not be much more than a century old, but the explanation is simple enough. Oldest Helsinki, built mostly of wood, was repeatedly ravaged by fires and wars. The real development of the town began when it became capital of Finland in 1812, and acquired a new and powerful impetus, still at work, when Finland became a sovereign state in 1917.

North of *Suurlori Square* are a number of public buildings erected during the latter half of the 19th century: the Bank of Finland, the State Archives, the House of the Four Estates and the University Library. But in the old residential ward in which these are situated, twentieth-century Helsinki is already much in evidence.

ROUND THE PENINSULA

● So far we have kept to a small area of the city occupying a single corner of the peninsula. Before faring forth into the unknown regions around the City heart of Helsinki, let us glance across *South Harbour* beyond the row of bond warehouses on the other side. Over there lies *Katajanokka*, a solidly built residential ward containing the Mint and naval barracks and yards, but remarkable chiefly for its specimens of Finnish romantic architecture. The *Uspenski Cathedral*, a typical Greek Orthodox church, points the entrance to this ward to those who wish to visit it.

Yearly fish market.





The Runeberg-Esplanade and the business quarters of Keskuskatu Street cross each other in the heart of the city.

Southward of the City area residential streets and local shopping areas alternate right to the tip of the peninsula. But if we follow its eastern side, crossing Observatory Hill for the views, we come to the venerable Kaivopuisto Park, on the left side of which is an exclusive villa area where diplomatists, industrial magnates and other notabilities live in dignified seclusion.

Continuing along the drive skirting the sea front, we come to the Eira villa district, almost as exclusive as Kaivopuisto. Beyond this, as we turn north again, we pass through a small industrial area — though it modestly hides its factories, Helsinki is an important industrial city — before emerging into West Harbour, which is quite a separate port in itself with big coal hoists and quays for large ocean-going steamers. Near the base of this harbour a new long bridge to one of the island suburbs bears witness to the way Helsinki is bursting the bounds that seek to confine it to its peninsula. Beyond the bridge is a popular Lido.

This time, however, we return citywards along the Bulevardi, an important avenue, passing the Technical University and the modest Opera House.

A CITY OF FLAT-DWELLERS

● If the visitor has already not observed that Helsinki is a city of flats, he is bound to do so when he turns northward from Heikinkatu to Töölö, the region beyond the imposing *Parliament Building*. It is in this direction that the city is expanding most rapidly, and once a purely residential area, Töölö is rapidly acquiring its own shopping centres, churches, restaurants, cinemas, etc. But for the most Töölö consists of streets and streets of tall blocks of flats, vying with each other in modernity. Land is dear in the municipal area, and any building below five storeys in height is uneconomical. Left to themselves, builders would build to any height; only the authorities, to ensure sun and air for all, allow them six or seven storeys only in specially broad streets or facing open spaces. Töölö is the home of the upper and lower middle classes. Here live members of the professions, civil servants, intellectuals, business men, office workers. Töölö is the Kensington, Bloomsbury and Chelsea of Helsinki all in one.

Here are the first of the ultramodern hospitals of which Helsinki is proud, and it is only a question of a few years before those still on the northern fringe of Töölö will also be in Töölö.



THE STADIUM

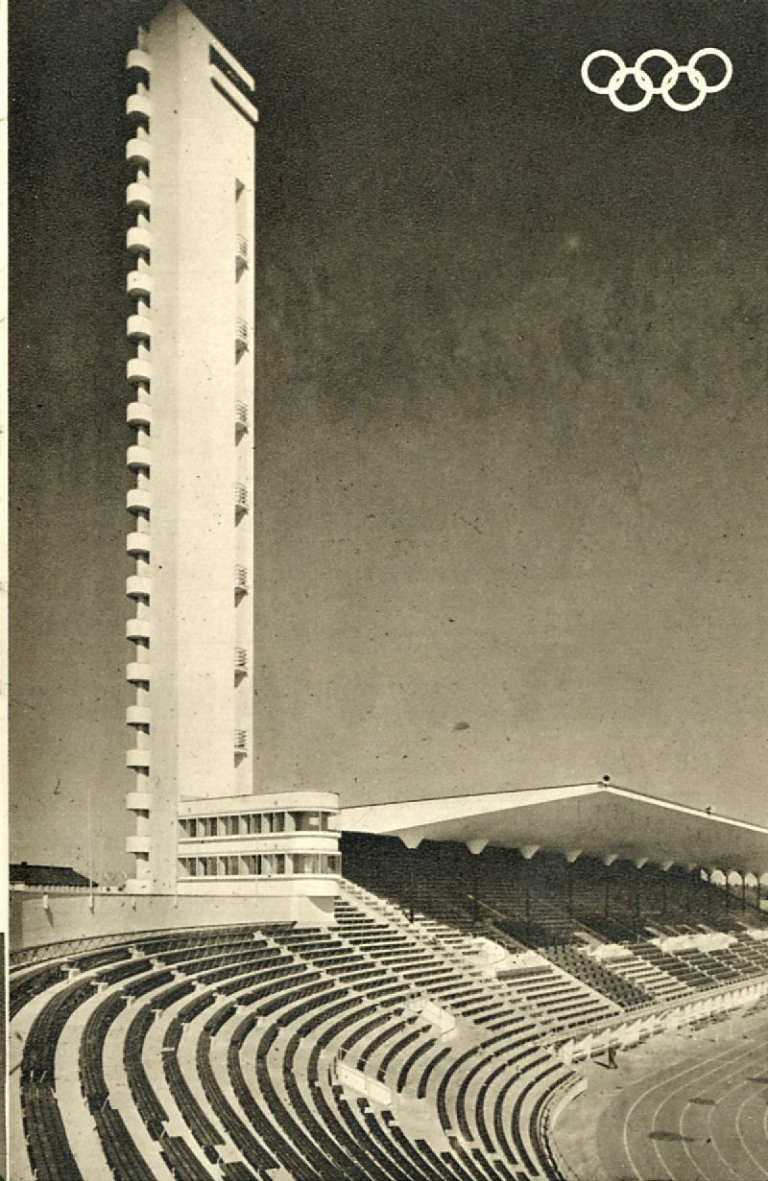
● On the eastern side of Töölö, well within the city, the slender white tower of the Stadium, the focal point of the 1940 Olympic Games, is the most conspicuous landmark. Impossible to miss the Stadium even if, while exploring Töölö, one has passed the Messuhalli exhibition hall, where the Olympic boxing and wrestling contests are to be held. And from the top of this modern minaret there is a really marvellous bird's-eye view of Helsinki and its surroundings.

AN EAST END WITH A DIFFERENCE

● East of the area of football and athletic grounds, granite mounds and vestiges of forest in which the Stadium is situated, lies *Sörnäinen*, the East End of Helsinki. This working-class district is reached also by turning north from the eastern end of the City area instead of from its western end as one did to reach Töölö.

Here one might expect to find slums, only there are none in Helsinki. One comes instead to another region of blocks of flats, playgrounds and plantations, broad streets and avenues. In the older part one sees an occasional wooden house, and along the shore and on the outskirts of the region are factories, but

The busy corner of Stockmann's Department Stores.



The Stadium, the scene of the Olympic Games in 1940.



Modern office building in the working class district.

Parks and open places ensure sun and air for the inhabitants of the Töölö quarter.

on the whole the district is a model of civic enterprise, well-planned, solidly-built, hygienic and pleasant. The *Aleksis Kivi elementary school* in this area (2,300 pupils in two shifts) is a special sight for visitors interested in social welfare problems; it represents the last word in educational science.

THE SIGHTS OF HELSINKI

● In the course of this breakneck rush around Helsinki we have neglected to stop at many places that should be seen. Those interested in art are recommended to visit the *Ateneum* (opposite it, on the far side of Railway Square, is the National Theatre with a statue of Aleksis Kivi, Finland's greatest writer, in front of it) for its large collections of Finnish and foreign art. Other art galleries are the *Sinebrychoff Collections* (old art) in the Bulevardi, and the *Taidehalli* (exhibitions of modern Finnish art).

Museums include the *National Museum*, just past Parliament Building, devoted to the past of the Finns; the *Municipal Museum* across the road (history of Helsinki); the *University Zoological Museum*; the *Social Museum* (workers' protection and social welfare subjects). The *Seurasaaari Open-air Museum* affords interesting glimpses into the daily life of the Finns in olden times. The *Suomenlinna* fortifications on a group of islands guarding the approach to the city are in themselves a good goal for a pleasant excursion, but offer, for further value, a *War Museum* and the *Ehrensward Collections* (history of the fortress). The *Korkeasaari Zoo* is reached by ferry steamer from North Harbour.

Architectural sights, in addition to buildings already mentioned, are too frequent to be enumerated. The visitor interested in architecture can choose his own as he strolls about the town. It may amuse him to pick out the successive styles, from the neo-



classicism of Suurtori Square through the mixed style of the latter half of the 19th century and the national northern-romantic granite style of the turn of the century to the ever severer rationalism of the modern school. The numerous statues, fountains and other sculptures that help so much to beautify the city can also be left to the visitor to discover on his rambles.

HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

● The modernity of Helsinki is reflected in its hotels. They are efficiently managed institutions, international in character rather than in any way typically Finnish, and visitors are free in their praise of them. *Kämp*, *Seurahuone*, *Torni* and *Grand* are the four big first-class hotels. Slightly smaller but first-class are the *Carlton*, *Helsinki* and *Karelia* hotels. A simpler, but good and quiet place is the *NNKY (YWCA) Hospiz*. All these and other hotels will be found in a hotel list giving prices and other details (free from travel bureaux and tourist bodies).

The same convenient list gives table d'hôte prices at restaurants. Café and restaurant life has always been lively in Helsinki, and there are establishments to suit every purse. The leading restaurants are those of the big hotels mentioned; further, the elegant *Savoy*, *Fazer's* (in the same building as Fazer's Café), the summer restaurants *Kappeli*, *Royal* and *Kaivohuone*. Simpler good restaurants will be found in the City area and in Töölö. The co-operative restaurants are good and inexpensive popular places; the biggest occupies the top floor of the low white *Lasilpalsi* («Glass Palace») in Heikinkatu. British visitors will find the *English Tea Room* in Unioninkatu a pleasant place.

IN SEARCH OF AMUSEMENT

● Finns refuse to spend the beautiful Finnish summer indoors if they can help it. And so the theatres, opera, concert halls and many cinemas close down for the summer months. Instead of to such pleasures the Helsinki inhabitant turns to bathing at *Hiekkaranta*, *Pihlajasaari* or *Uunisaari* (the two latter are nearby islands), tennis at *Munkkiniemi*, *Kulosaari* or *Westend*, golf at *Tali*, boating and yachting, football matches, athletic meets, swimming competitions. And afterwards he goes to one of the open-air restaurants in the town or in its vicinity. *Munkkiniemi* (two restaurants: *Kalastajatorppa* and *Golf Casino*) and *Kulosaari* (Brändö) (Casino Restaurant), where there is also a hotel, are favourite places. *Luoto* (Klippan), on an islet beside the Yacht Club Pavilion, and the *Kulosaari Casino* have dance floors, similarly the *Kaivohuone* Restaurant and the *Grand Hotel Restaurant*, both of which offer a cabaret programme as well. The marvellous colour effects as the sunset fades into the twilight of the white northern nights lend an extra fascination to an evening spent at one of the summer restaurants. A good evening attraction are further the steam-launches that carry passengers for a two-hour run through the islands.

Photographs by Ilmavoimat, T. Nousiainen, A. Pietinen and F. Runeberg.

Enjoying life on one of the numerous beaches of the city.

INFORMATION

Finnish Tourist Association (Suomen Matkailijyhdistys), information only, Aleksanterinkatu 7 A.
The Finland Travel Bureau, Ltd. (Suomen Matkatoimisto Oy.), P. Esplanaadikatu 19. — Branch Office: Stockmann's Department Stores, Aleksanterinkatu 52.
The Travel Bureau Kaleva, Ltd. (Matkatoimisto Kaleva Oy.), Heikinkatu 9.
The Aero Travel Bureau (Aeron Matkatoimisto), P. Esplanaadikatu 2
The School Travel Bureau (Koulumatkailutoimisto) group excursions, Linja-autoasema.
The Peoples' Travel Bureau, Ltd. (Kansan Matkatoimisto Oy.), Paasivuorenkatu 3.

SIGHTSEEING TOURS

by motor coach and motor boat, arranged daily by the Finland Travel Bureau. The fares include guide, tips and entrance fees.

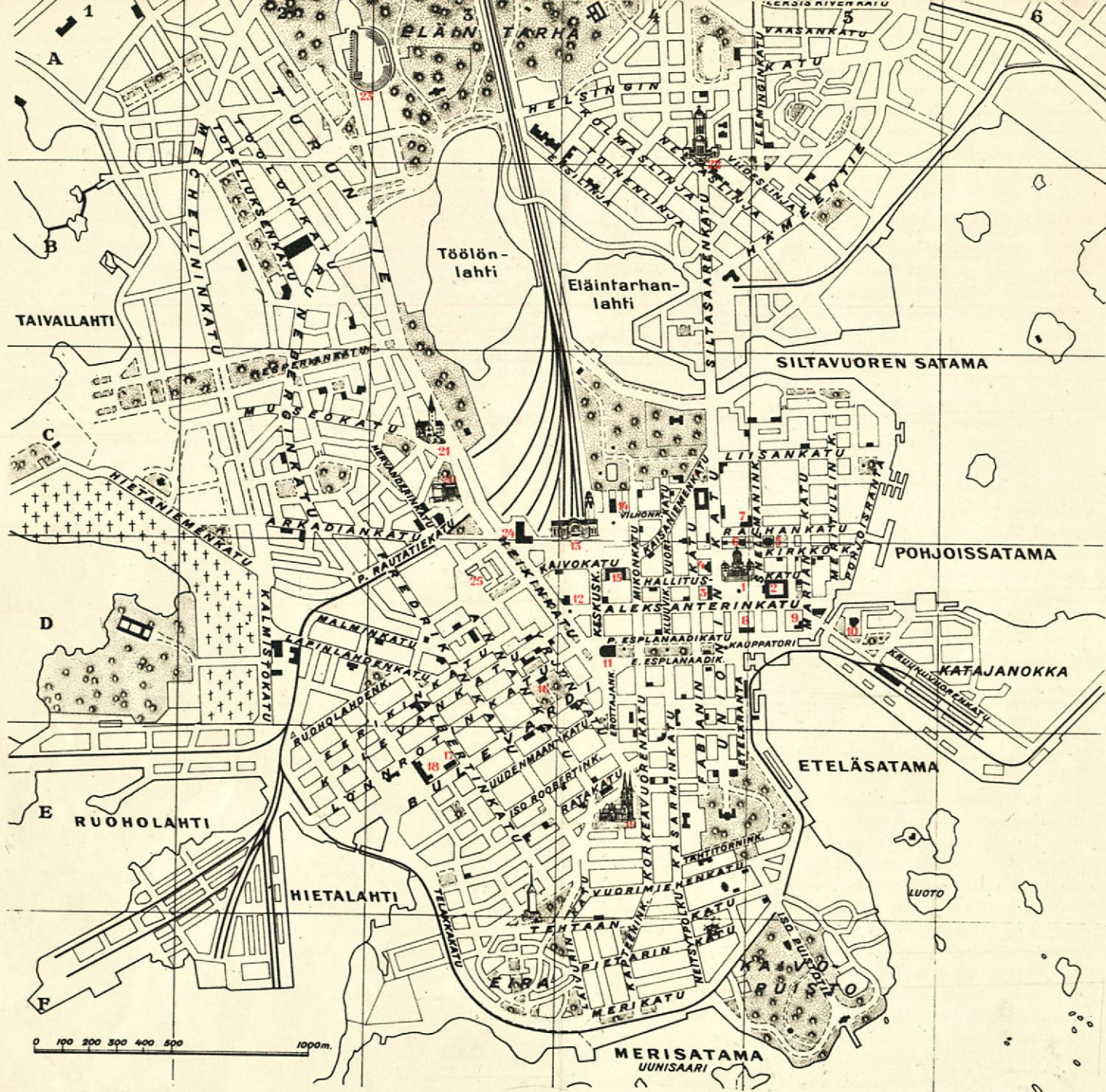
Motor Coach Tour I, 2 hours, start 10 a.m. from the Market Place including visit to the House of Parliament and Atheneum (Art collection). Price Fmks 50:—.

Motor Coach Tour II, 3 1/2 hours, start 2 p.m. from the Market Place including visit to the National Museum, Stadium, Open air Museum at Seurasaari and Westend. Price Fmks 75:—.

Motor Boat Tour I, 2 hours, start 10 a.m. from the Tourist Bridge of the North Harbour (Pohjoissatama) to the East Archipelago and the Degerö Canal. Price Fmks 45:—.

Motor Boat Tour II, 3 hours, start 3 p.m. from the Tourist Bridge of the North Harbour (Pohjoissatama) to the Western Archipelago, five o'clock tea at the Island of the Esbo Yacht Club. Price Fmks 75:—.





MAP OF HELSINKI

EXPLANATIONS

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 SuurkirKKo Church (D 4, 5) | 8 Town Hall (D 4, 5) | 17 Opera House (E 3) |
| 2 State Council Building (D 5) | 9 President's Palace (D 5) | 18 Technical University (E 3) |
| 3 University (D 4) | 10 Jspenski Cathedral (D 5) | 19 St. John's Church (E 4) |
| 4 University Library (D 4) | 11 Swedish Theatre (D 4) | 20 Parliament Building (C 3) |
| 5 House of the Estates (C, D 5) | 12 Student Corps Buildings (D 4) | 21 National Museum (C 3) |
| 6 Bank of Finland (C, D 4) | 13 Railway Station (C 3, 4) | 22 Kallio Church (A 4) |
| 7 State Archives (C 4, 5) | 14 National Theatre (C 4) | 23 Stadium (A 2) |
| | 15 Atheneum (D 4) | 24 Post-Office (C 3) |
| | 16 Old Church (D 3) | 25 Bus Station (D 3) |

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